

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

# BIRDS

OF

BENTSEN-RIO GRANDE VALLEY  
S T A T E P A R K

WORLD BIRDING CENTER



A FIELD CHECKLIST

2005

*Cover: Illustration of Mississippi Kite by Rob Fleming.*

# INTRODUCTION

**B**entsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park consists of 570 acres of subtropical resaca woodlands and drier thorny brush lands that once characterized the entirety of the Lower Rio Grande Valley but which is now limited to scattered fragments. The park supports about 370 species of birds, many of which are subtropical species typical of eastern Mexico and not found north of the border beyond extreme southern Texas. Some of the characteristic species of the region include Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Gray Hawk, Hook-billed Kite, Plain Chachalaca, White-tipped Dove, Groove-billed Ani, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Couch's Kingbird, Great Kiskadee, Green Jay, Olive Sparrow, and Altamira Oriole. Additionally Bentsen has become well known for consistently producing extremely rare visitors from Mexico, often the first records for these species north of the border.

The natural habitats of the Park have been created by the evolution of the Rio Grande over time as it has carved out and then abandoned channels and nourished the lands along it with life-giving floods. Presently the river has been controlled by numerous dams throughout its watershed, and vegetation communities in the park have been gradually drying out and becoming more arid. The transition of Bentsen from traditional state park to headquarters of the World Birding Center has resulted in tripling the size of the protected area with the incorporation of donated land and a cooperative relationship between the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

This checklist, compiled by John Arvin, is based on observations by numerous individuals, and includes those species which have been observed within or passing over the park. Nomenclature and organization for this checklist follow the A.O.U. *Check-list of North American Birds*, 7th edition, 1998 as currently supplemented.

Because we will be updating this checklist as additional observations are made, we ask that you report details of new or unusual sightings. Reports may be sent to the World Birding Center, 2800 S. Bentsen Palms Dr., Mission, Texas 78572 or may be left at the park headquarters.

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*Please help us protect the natural avian communities in our parks by refraining from using playback tapes of bird songs. Frequent use of these tapes disrupts normal avian activity patterns, essential territorial behavior and may lead to nest failure. Thank you for your cooperation.*

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## LEGEND

- C - common; seen daily in some numbers  
U - uncommon; usually seen daily in proper habitat and season but only one or a few individuals  
R - rare; seen only once or twice a year and may not occur every year  
X - extremely rare; only one or two records exist.  
\* - has nested in the park  
• - a species found north of the Mexican border entirely in extreme southern Texas or one which can be found there more reliably than in other areas.
- Sp - Spring (March-May)  
Su - Summer (June-August)  
F - Fall (September-November)  
W - Winter (December-February)

# CHECKLIST

	W	Sp	S	F
<b>DUCKS &amp; GEESE</b>				
___ * Black-bellied Whistling-Duck .....	U	C	C	U
___ Fulvous Whistling-Duck .....	X	R	R	R
___ Greater White-fronted Goose .....	C			C
___ Snow Goose .....	U			U
___ Wood Duck .....	R			R
___ Gadwall .....	C			C
___ American Wigeon .....	C			C
___ Mallard .....	R			R
___ "Mexican Duck" .....	U	U	U	U
___ Mottled Duck .....	R	R	R	R
___ * Blue-winged Teal .....	C	C	R	C
___ Cinnamon Teal .....	R	R		R
___ Northern Shoveler .....	C	C		C
___ Northern Pintail .....	U			U
___ Green-winged Teal .....	C	U		C
___ Canvasback .....	R			R
___ Redhead .....	R			R
___ Ring-necked Duck .....	C	U		C
___ Lesser Scaup .....	U	U		U
___ Bufflehead .....	U			U
___ Hooded Merganser .....	R			R
___ Masked Duck .....	X	X	X	X
___ * Ruddy Duck .....	U	U	R	U
<b>CHACHALACAS &amp; GUANS</b>				
___ * Plain Chachalaca .....	C	C	C	C
<b>NEW WORLD QUAIL</b>				
___ Northern Bobwhite .....	U	U	U	U

	W	Sp	S	F
<b>GREBES</b>				
___ * • Least Grebe .....	U	U	U	U
___ Pied-billed Grebe .....	C	C	C	C
<b>PELICANS</b>				
___ American White Pelican .....	C	C		C
<b>CORMORANTS</b>				
___ * • Neotropic Cormorant .....	U	U	U	U
___ Double-crested Cormorant .....		C		U
<b>ANHINGAS</b>				
___ * Anhinga .....	U	C	U	U
<b>FRIGATEBIRDS</b>				
___ Magnificent Frigatebird .....				X
<b>HERONS</b>				
___ American Bittern .....	R	R		R
___ * Least Bittern .....		C	C	
___ Great Blue Heron .....	C	C	U	C
___ Great Egret .....	C	C	C	C
___ Snowy Egret .....	C	C	C	C
___ Little Blue Heron .....	R	C	U	C
___ Tricolored Heron .....	U	U	U	U
___ Reddish Egret .....		R	R	
___ Cattle Egret .....	C	C	C	C
___ * Green Heron .....	R	C	C	C
___ Black-crowned Night-Heron .....	U	U	R	U
___ Yellow-crowned Night-Heron .....	R	U	U	R
<b>IBIS &amp; SPOONBILLS</b>				
___ White Ibis .....			R	R
___ White-faced Ibis .....	U	U		U
___ Roseate Spoonbill .....			R	R

	W	Sp	S	F
<b>STORKS</b>				
___ Jabiru .....			X	
___ Wood Stork .....			U	U
<b>NEW WORLD VULTURES</b>				
___ Black Vulture .....	U	U	U	U
___ Turkey Vulture .....	C	C	C	C
<b>OSPREYS</b>				
___ Osprey .....	C	C	R	C
<b>HAWKS, KITES, &amp; EAGLES</b>				
___ *• Hook-billed Kite .....	R	R	R	R
___ Swallow-tailed Kite .....		R		R
___ * White-tailed Kite .....	C	C	C	C
___ Snail Kite .....		X		
___ Mississippi Kite .....		C		C
___ Northern Harrier .....	U	U		U
___ Sharp-shinned Hawk .....	U	C		C
___ * Cooper's Hawk .....	U	C	R	C
___ *• Gray Hawk .....	U	U	U	U
___ *• Harris's Hawk .....	C	C	C	C
___ Roadside Hawk .....	X			X
___ Red-shouldered Hawk .....	U	U		U
___ Broad-winged Hawk .....	X	C		C
___ Short-tailed Hawk .....		X	X	X
___ Swainson's Hawk .....	X	C	R	C
___ • White-tailed Hawk .....	U	U		R
___ Zone-tailed Hawk .....	R	R		R
___ Red-tailed Hawk .....	C	U		R
___ Ferruginous Hawk .....	R			R

	W	Sp	S	F
<b>FALCONS &amp; CARACARAS</b>				
___ Collared Forest-Falcon .....	X			
___ • Crested Caracara .....	U	U	U	U
___ American Kestrel .....	C	C		C
___ Merlin .....	R	R		R
___ Peregrine Falcon .....	R	R		R
<b>RAILS</b>				
___ * King Rail .....	R	R	R	R
___ Virginia Rail .....	R	R		R
___ Sora .....	C	C		C
___ Purple Gallinule .....		R	R	
___ * Common Moorhen .....	C	C	C	C
___ * American Coot .....	U	U		U
<b>CRANES</b>				
___ Sandhill Crane .....	U	U		U
<b>PLOVERS</b>				
___ American Golden-Plover .....		R		
___ Semipalmated Plover .....		R		R
___ Killdeer .....	C	C	C	C
<b>STILTS &amp; AVOCETS</b>				
___ * Black-necked Stilt .....	C	C	C	C
___ American Avocet .....	U	U		U
<b>JACANAS</b>				
___ Northern Jacana .....		X	X	X
<b>SANDPIPERS</b>				
___ Greater Yellowlegs .....	U	C		C
___ Lesser Yellowlegs .....	C	C		C
___ Solitary Sandpiper .....	R	U		U



	W	Sp	S	F
___ Spotted Sandpiper .....	U	C		C
___ Upland Sandpiper .....		C		C
___ Long-billed Curlew .....	C	C		C
___ Hudsonian Godwit .....		R		
___ Semipalmated Sandpiper .....		U		U
___ Western Sandpiper .....	U	U		U
___ Least Sandpiper .....	C	C		C
___ White-rumped Sandpiper .....		U		
___ Baird's Sandpiper .....		U		U
___ Pectoral Sandpiper .....	U	U		U
___ Stilt Sandpiper .....	U	U		U
___ Long-billed Dowitcher .....	U	U		U
___ Wilson's Snipe .....	U	U		U
___ Wilson's Phalarope .....		U		U

### GULLS & TERNS

___ Laughing Gull .....		U	U	U
___ Franklin's Gull .....		C		C
___ Ring-billed Gull .....	U	U		U
___ Gull-billed Tern .....		U	R	U
___ Caspian Tern .....	U	U		U
___ Forster's Tern .....	U	U		U
___ Least Tern .....		R	R	
___ Black Tern .....		U		U
___ Black Skimmer .....			R	R

### PIGEONS & DOVES

___ Rock Pigeon .....	U	U	U	U
___ * Red-billed Pigeon .....		R	R	
___ * White-winged Dove .....	R	C	C	U
___ * Mourning Dove .....	C	C	C	C
___ * Inca Dove .....	C	C	C	C

	W	Sp	S	F
___* Common Ground-Dove .....	C	C	C	C
___ Ruddy Ground-Dove .....		X		
___* • White-tipped Dove .....	C	C	C	C
___ Ruddy Quail-Dove .....	X			

### CUCKOOS & ANIS

___ Black-billed Cuckoo .....		R		X
___* Yellow-billed Cuckoo .....		C	C	
___* Greater Roadrunner .....	U	U	U	U
___* • Groove-billed Ani .....	R	U	C	C

### BARN OWLS

___* Barn Owl .....	U	U	U	U
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### TYPICAL OWLS

___* Eastern Screech-Owl .....	C	C	C	C
___* Great Horned Owl .....	U	U	U	U
___ • Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl.....	R	R	R	R
___* Elf Owl .....		U	U	
___ Burrowing Owl .....	R			R
___ Mottled Owl .....	X			
___ Long-eared Owl .....	R			
___ Stygian Owl .....	X			
___ Short-eared Owl .....	R			

### NIGHTJARS

___* Lesser Nighthawk .....		C	U	
___ Common Nighthawk .....	X	C	C	R
___* • Common Pauraque .....	C	C	C	C
___ Common Poorwill .....		R		
___ Chuck-wills-widow .....		C		R
___ Whip-poor-will .....		U		U

	W	Sp	S	F
<b>SWIFTS</b>				
___ Chimney Swift .....		C	R	R
<b>HUMMINGBIRDS</b>				
___ • Buff-bellied Hummingbird .....	R	R	R	R
___ Ruby-throated Hummingbird .....		U		C
___ Black-chinned Hummingbird .....	X	R	R	X
___ Rufous Hummingbird .....	R			R
<b>TROGONS</b>				
___ Elegant Trogon .....				X
<b>KINGFISHERS</b>				
___ * • Ringed Kingfisher .....	U	U	U	U
___ Belted Kingfisher .....	U	U		U
___ * • Green Kingfisher .....	U	U	U	U
<b>WOODPECKERS</b>				
___ * • Golden-fronted Woodpecker .....	C	C	C	C
___ Yellow-bellied Sapsucker .....	R			U
___ Red-naped Sapsucker .....	X			
___ Ladder-backed Woodpecker .....	C	C	C	C
___ Northern Flicker .....	R			R
<b>TYRANT FLYCATCHERS</b>				
___ * • N. Beardless-Tyrannulet .....	U	U	U	U
___ Olive-sided Flycatcher .....		U		U
___ Eastern Wood-Pewee .....		C		C
___ Yellow-bellied Flycatcher .....		U		C
___ Acadian Flycatcher .....		U		
___ Alder Flycatcher .....	C		C	
___ Willow Flycatcher .....	U		U	
___ Least Flycatcher .....	C		C	
___ Eastern Phoebe .....	C	U		C

	W	Sp	S	F
___ Say's Phoebe .....	R			R
___ Vermilion Flycatcher .....	U	U		U
___ Dusky-capped Flycatcher .....	X			
___ Ash-throated Flycatcher .....		R		
___ Great Crested Flycatcher .....		C		C
___ * Brown-crested Flycatcher .....		C	C	
___ * • Great Kiskadee .....	C	C	C	C
___ Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher .....		X		
___ * • Couch's Kingbird .....	R	C	C	C
___ • Tropical Kingbird .....	R	R	R	R
___ * Western Kingbird .....		C	C	
___ Eastern Kingbird .....		C		C
___ * Scissor-tailed Flycatcher .....	R	C	C	C

#### AFFINITIES UNCERTAIN

___ • Rose-throated Becard .....	X			X
___ Masked Tityra .....		X		

#### SHRIKES

___ Loggerhead Shrike .....	C	U	R	C
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#### VIREOS

___ * White-eyed Vireo .....	U	U	U	U
___ Bell's Vireo .....		R		R
___ Blue-headed Vireo .....	U	R		U
___ Yellow-throated Vireo .....		R		R
___ Warbling Vireo .....		U		U
___ Philadelphia Vireo .....		R		X
___ Red-eyed Vireo .....		U		U
___ • Yellow-green Vireo .....		R	R	

	W	Sp	S	F
<b>JAYS &amp; CROWS</b>				
___ * Green Jay .....	C	C	C	C
___ • Tamaulipas Crow .....			X	
___ Chihuahuan Raven .....	R	R		R
<b>LARKS</b>				
___ * Horned Lark .....	R	R	R	R
<b>SWALLOWS</b>				
___ Purple Martin .....		C	U	C
___ Tree Swallow .....	R	U		U
___ N. Rough-winged Swallow .....	R	U	U	U
___ * Bank Swallow .....		C	C	C
___ * Cliff Swallow .....		U	U	U
___ * Cave Swallow .....	U	C	C	C
___ * Barn Swallow .....	R	C	C	C
<b>TITMICE</b>				
___ * Black-crested Titmouse .....	U	U	U	U
<b>VERDINS</b>				
___ * Verdin .....	R	R	R	R
<b>NUTHATCHES</b>				
___ Red-breasted Nuthatch .....	R			R
<b>CREEPERS</b>				
___ Brown Creeper .....	X			
<b>WRENS</b>				
___ * Cactus Wren .....	R	R	R	R
___ Carolina Wren .....	R	R	R	R
___ * Bewick's Wren .....	C	C		C
___ Winter Wren .....	R			R

	W	Sp	S	F
___ Marsh Wren .....	U	U		U
___ Sedge Wren .....	R	R		R
<b>KINGLETS</b>				
___ Golden-crowned Kinglet .....	R			R
___ Ruby-crowned Kinglet .....	C			C
<b>GNATCATCHERS</b>				
___ Blue-gray Gnatcatcher .....	C	C		C
<b>THRUSHES</b>				
___ Eastern Bluebird .....	U	U		U
___ Veery .....		R		
___ Gray-cheeked Thrush .....		R		
___ Swainson's Thrush .....		U		
___ Hermit Thrush .....	U			U
___ Wood Thrush .....		R		
___ * Clay-colored Robin .....	U	U	U	U
___ White-throated Robin .....	X			X
___ American Robin .....	U			U
___ Varied Thrush .....	X			
<b>THRASHERS &amp; MOCKINGBIRDS</b>				
___ Gray Catbird .....	R	R		R
___ Northern Mockingbird .....	C	C	C	C
___ * Long-billed Thrasher .....	C	C	C	C
___ * Curve-billed Thrasher .....	U	U	U	U
<b>STARLINGS</b>				
___ European Starling .....	R	R	R	R
<b>PIPITS</b>				
___ American Pipit .....	U	U		U
___ Sprague's Pipit .....	R	R		R

	W	Sp	S	F
<b>WAXWINGS</b>				
___ Cedar Waxwing .....	U	U		
<b>WOOD WARBLERS</b>				
___ Blue-winged Warbler .....		R		
___ Golden-winged Warbler .....		R		
___ Tennessee Warbler .....		U		
___ Orange-crowned Warbler .....	C	C		C
___ Nashville Warbler .....	R	C		C
___ Northern Parula .....	R	U		U
___ * Tropical Parula .....	R	R	R	R
___ Yellow Warbler .....	X	C		C
___ Chestnut-sided Warbler .....		R		
___ Magnolia Warbler .....		R		
___ Yellow-rumped Warbler .....	C			U
___ Black-throated Gray Warbler .....	R			R
___ Black-throated Green Warbler .....	U	U		U
___ Townsend's Warbler .....	R			R
___ Blackburnian Warbler .....		R		
___ Yellow-throated Warbler .....	R			R
___ Pine Warbler .....	R			R
___ Bay-breasted Warbler .....		R		
___ Cerulean Warbler .....		R		
___ Black-and-white Warbler .....	U	C		U
___ American Redstart .....		R		
___ Prothonotary Warbler .....		X		
___ Worm-eating Warbler .....		R		R
___ Ovenbird .....	R	U		U
___ Northern Waterthrush .....	X	U		U
___ Louisiana Waterthrush .....		U		U
___ Kentucky Warbler .....		R		

	W	Sp	S	F
___ Mourning Warbler .....		U		U
___ MacGillivray's Warbler .....		R		R
___ * Common Yellowthroat .....	C	C	R	C
___ Hooded Warbler .....		R		
___ Wilson's Warbler .....	R	U		U
___ Canada Warbler .....		U		U
___ * Yellow-breasted Chat .....		U		U

### TANAGERS

___ Summer Tanager .....	R	U		U
___ Scarlet Tanager .....		R		
___ Western Tanager .....	R			

### EMBERIZID FINCHES

___ * White-collared Seedeater .....			X	
___ Yellow-faced Grassquit .....			X	
___ * Olive Sparrow .....	U	U	U	U
___ Green-tailed Towhee .....	R			
___ Spotted Towhee .....	R			
___ Cassin's Sparrow .....		U		U
___ Chipping Sparrow .....	U	U		U
___ Clay-colored Sparrow .....		R		R
___ Field Sparrow .....	R			R
___ Vesper Sparrow .....	U			U
___ Lark Sparrow .....	U	U	U	U
___ Black-throated Sparrow .....	R			
___ Savannah Sparrow .....	C	C		C
___ Grasshopper Sparrow .....	R	R		R
___ Song Sparrow .....	X			
___ Lincoln's Sparrow .....	C	U		C
___ Swamp Sparrow .....	R			R
___ White-throated Sparrow .....	R			



	W	Sp	S	F
___ White-crowned Sparrow .....	R			R
___ Dark-eyed Junco .....	X			

### CARDINAL GROSBEAKS

___ Crimson-collared Grosbeak .....			X	
___ * Northern Cardinal .....	U	U	U	U
___ Pyrrhuloxia .....	R			R
___ Rose-breasted Grosbeak .....		R		R
___ Black-headed Grosbeak .....	X			
___ • Blue Bunting .....	R			R
___ Blue Grosbeak .....		U	U	U
___ Lazuli Bunting .....	R			R
___ Indigo Bunting .....	U	U		U
___ Varied Bunting .....	X	X	X	X
___ Painted Bunting .....		U	U	U
___ Dickcissal .....	X	C	U	C

### BLACKBIRDS & ORIOLES

___ * Red-winged Blackbird .....	C	C	C	C
___ Eastern Meadowlark .....	R	R	R	R
___ Western Meadowlark .....	C			C
___ Yellow-headed Blackbird .....	X	R		R
___ * Great-tailed Grackle .....	C	C	C	C
___ * Bronzed Cowbird .....	R	C	C	R
___ * Brown-headed Cowbird .....	C	C	U	C
___ * Orchard Oriole .....		U		C
___ * Hooded Oriole .....		R	R	
___ Bullock's Oriole .....		R		R
___ * Altamira Oriole .....	U	U	U	U
___ * Audubon's Oriole .....	X			
___ Baltimore Oriole .....		U	R	

	W	Sp	S	F
<b>OLD WORLD FINCHES</b>				
___ Red Crossbill .....		X		
___ Pine Siskin .....	R			R
___ Lesser Goldfinch .....	U	U	U	U
___ American Goldfinch .....	U			
<b>OLD WORLD SPARROWS</b>				
___ House Sparrow .....	U	U	U	U

## CITATION

Arvin, John C. July 2004. Birds of Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park: a field checklist. Natural Resources Program, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

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In 1983, the Texas Legislature created the Special Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Fund. This fund may be used for nongame wildlife and endangered species research and conservation, habitat acquisition and development and dissemination of information pertaining to nongame management. Money for this fund is obtained through private donations and sale of nongame wildlife art prints and stamps. This fund now gives Texans a unique opportunity to help support this state's valuable and sensitive nongame resources. Your individual contributions and purchases of nongame art prints and stamps will help determine the level of nongame conservation activities in Texas. For more information call toll-free (1-800-792-1112) or contact: **Nongame and Endangered Species Program, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, Texas 78744.**

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Natural Resources Program  
Texas Parks and Wildlife  
4200 Smith School Road  
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